

poverty, median household income is more than \$6,500 below the national average, and unemployment through layoffs in traditional manufacturing industries is persistent. The population grew only 0.6 percent between 1990 and 2000, during which time the U.S. population rose by 13.2 percent, indicating significant out-migration and loss of young people.

The southeastern region of the United States includes the coastal and central portions of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. Approximately 40 percent of the counties in this region have had 20 percent or more of their citizens living in poverty, on average, during the last 30 years. The area has also faced record unemployment. Additionally, this region has experienced natural disasters at a rate of two to three times greater than any other region of the U.S. The southeastern region is one of the last areas of the country without a Federal authority dedicated to ending poverty and strengthening communities. The Southeast Crescent Authority (SECA) authorizes a local-State-Federal partnership to lift citizens in this geographic area out of poverty and create jobs by targeting the communities with the greatest need.

This bill has broad bipartisan support, and the committee has held a series of hearings regarding the need for these economic development commissions. The model for economic development through partnerships between the Federal Government and State and local governments has worked extremely well in the case of the Appalachian Regional Commission, and I am certain it will continue to serve to enhance the lives and livelihoods of citizens in other regions.

I submit an exchange of letters regarding jurisdiction, and I support HR. 3246 and urge its passage.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, September 17, 2007.

Hon. JAMES L. OBERSTAR,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN OBERSTAR: I am writing to confirm our mutual understanding regarding consideration of H.R. 3246, the "Regional Infrastructure Development Act of 2007," which was referred to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and reported to the House on September 7. Specifically, I appreciate your acknowledgement of the Committee on Agriculture's jurisdictional interest in provisions contained in the bill that affect rural development programs.

As you know, clause 1(a) of Rule X gives the Committee on Agriculture jurisdiction over bills that affect rural development programs. Given the importance of moving this bill forward promptly, I would be glad to waive any consideration of this measure as to allow its timely consideration by the entire House of Representatives. However, I do so with the understanding that this procedural route will not be construed to prejudice the Agriculture Committee's jurisdictional interests and prerogatives on this bill, or any other similar legislation, and will not be considered as precedent for consideration of matters of jurisdictional interest to the Agriculture Committee in the future.

Furthermore, in the event a conference with the Senate is requested in this matter, I would ask you to support the Committee on Agriculture's request to be represented.

Thank you very much for your courtesy in this matter and I look forward to your con-

tinued cooperation between our Committees as we deal with these matters in the future.

Sincerely,

COLLIN C. PETERSON
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COM-
MITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE,

Washington, DC, September 17, 2007.

Hon. COLLIN C. PETERSON,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, House of
Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN PETERSON: Thank you for your September 17, 2007 letter regarding H.R. 3246, the "Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007". Your support for this legislation and your assistance in ensuring its timely consideration are greatly appreciated.

I agree that provisions in the bill are of jurisdictional interest to the Committee on Agriculture. I acknowledge that by forgoing a sequential referral, your Committee is not relinquishing its jurisdiction and I will fully support your request to be represented in a House-Senate conference on those provisions over which the Committee on Agriculture has jurisdiction in H.R. 3246.

I value your cooperation and look forward to working with you as we move ahead with this important economic development legislation.

Sincerely,

JAMES L. OBERSTAR,
Chairman.

Mr. McINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007, which provides a comprehensive regional approach to economic and infrastructure development in the most severely economically distressed regions in the Nation. This bill includes legislation that I have introduced in every Congress since the 107th Congress that will establish a SouthEast Crescent Authority for economic development. The authority would cover the southeastern portion of the United States, encompassing the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida, which have all seen poverty rates well above the national average coupled with record unemployment—the double whammy—poverty and unemployment.

I would like to personally thank the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman OBERSTAR and his Ranking Member, Mr. MICA, and the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development Chairwoman HOLMES NORTON and the Ranking Member, Mr. GRAVES, for their hard work and dedication to our Nation's most economically disadvantaged regions. It is their compassion, cooperation, and commitment that brought us here today, and I applaud them for their efforts to continue this cause, and I thank them for their friendship and support.

As a Member that represents a district from one of the Southern States that has experienced job growth stagnation, I have seen firsthand the restructuring of the South's economy. Jobs in textiles and furniture-making have decreased substantially while jobs in retail, services, and the professions have rushed in. Although a more high-tech and globally competitive economy has enabled new opportunities for employment in the South, it has also dismantled jobs long held by employees who have few prospects for shifting to other jobs with comparable pay. In addition, the seven States of the SECA region also experience natural disasters at a rate of two to three

times greater than any other region of the United States, and this vulnerability to natural disasters further exacerbates the ability to recover from economic distress.

Modeled primarily after the successful Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), the SouthEast Crescent Authority hopes to enjoin a local-State-Federal partnership to lift our citizens out of poverty and create jobs. With the Federal allocation of funding, SECA seeks to target monies to programs which address one or more of the following criteria for community betterment: (1) infrastructure, (2) education and job training, (3) health care, (4) entrepreneurship, and (5) leadership development. Those communities with the greatest need will be targeted, and grants will be made according to the degree of distress.

Mr. Speaker, the time is now to work to change this pattern and ensure that those individuals—like those in my district who work in textiles or manufacturing—and those communities—like the many rural communities that have been affected—are not left behind. And I am confident that the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 that is before us today will be able to do just that. It's the least we can do to act now and help "the least of these" who have suffered enough and to help bolster economic progress and possibility. Thank you, and may God bless our efforts to help expand economic opportunities for all of our citizens and their families.

Mr. ARCURI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007.

I want to thank the distinguished Chairwoman of the Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management Subcommittee, Ms. NORTON, the Full Committee Chairman, and the Ranking Members for delivering this legislation which authorizes three new economic development commissions—the Northern Border, Southeast Crescent, and Southwest Border Regional Commissions—and reauthorizes the successful Delta and Northern Great Plains Regional Commissions. These Commissions will help bring economic development to regions of our country that desperately need it.

Over the last several decades, Upstate New York has had a consistent pattern of economic distress as a result of substantial losses in the manufacturing sector, coupled with aging infrastructure and lack of opportunities for a skilled workforce. My district alone has seen a staggering loss of more than 14,000 manufacturing jobs between 2000 and 2005. However, this isn't an anomaly, it is extremely characteristic of several States in the Northeast. A targeted regional approach can help bring back economic vitality to these regions.

This bipartisan legislation creates a Northern Border Regional Commission that will bring much needed job creation and economic development resources to the Northeast region. Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Upstate New York will all benefit tremendously from the establishment of this Commission because it will assess and address the very specific needs, assets, and challenges of the region as a whole.

The Commission will create a Federal-State partnership where local development districts and other non-profits bring project ideas and priorities to the Commission from the local level to promote economic development